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SUBJECT: Senegalese local elections: The Department of Medina Yoro
Foulah will vote again

REF: Dakar 384

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: On March 28, electors will be called to vote for a second time in a week in the department of the Region of Kolda. The Department of Medina Yorofoulah received their ballots after the official closing time of 18:00 and decided to conduct late night voting in violation of the law. After the National Electoral Commission (CENA) publicized the violation, the government was left with little choice but to reorganize elections in this area. End Summary.

Late night voting

12. (SBU) The representative of CENA in Kolda told Embassy staff that in many areas the GOS had delivered the equipment needed to conduct the voting (booths and ballot boxes) but had failed to deliver ballots. Some polling stations received their ballots around 14:00 (six hours after the official opening time) and were able to conduct the vote by extending its duration. However, some more remote areas received their ballots after the official closing time of 18:00. The CENA refused, for security reasons, to do an all night voting session in this area that has neither electricity nor a decent telephone network. However, seven villages in Medina Yorofoulah choose to ignore the CENA's decision.

Incompetence or Sabotage?

13. (SBU) Local opposition leaders were quick to claim collusion between local Ministry of Interior officials in charge of organizing the election and the ruling Democratic Party of Senegal (PDS) which was running under the banner of the SOPI coalition. They maintain that SOPI counted on the fact that they as an opposition did not have the means to provide transportation for their voters and that they knew that these people would chose to simply not vote. While it is almost impossible to prove the veracity of these allegations, Kolda is a more extreme case in the organizational problems that affected the voting as reported in reftel. The human rights organization RADDHO's Kolda representative blames it on incompetence by GOS administrators.

COMMENT

14. (SBU) Unofficial results indicate that the ruling party has won the Kolda region. The local CENA representative told Embassy that the approximately 3,000 people who will re-vote will not overturn SOPI's regional victory, but that respecting the electoral law was the object of the exercise. Once again CENA has proved that it is willing and ready to prevent the government from violating electoral laws. Until this election, the leadership of CENA was regarded as being far too passive and susceptible to pressure. To many people's surprise, this election revealed that CENA's regional representatives are ready fill the vacuum to uphold democratic standards.
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